

REDEPLOYMENT HOME

Redeployment home will be a happy but stressful time. It is not unusual for Soldiers to experience difficulties with readjusting to their home environment. If you find yourself having problems when you get home, refer to this brochure for assistance.

COPING STRATEGIES FOR REDEPLOYMENT HOME

There are a number of common strategies that you can use when coping with the stress and memory of deployment. You will have your own way of processing combat events and must find the coping strategies that work best for you. Be aware of your reactions to stress and use the coping strategies that have worked for you before. Individuals who have fewer problems after combat experiences cope with stress by:

- Focusing on brief time periods (e.g., think only about what the next step is).
- Focusing on the big picture (i.e., a full and meaningful life and military career, not one traumatic event).
- Seeing others as willing and able to provide support.
- Not second-guessing your past decisions and actions.¹

WHERE TO GET HELP

Remind yourself that your feelings are normal, given the situation, and seeking help is an effective strategy towards feeling better. There are a number of resources available to help Soldiers.

- Active-Duty Soldiers can contact their unit chaplain, unit mental health team, or primary medical provider.
- Reserve and National Guard can contact Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Centers and Vet Centers that provide veterans with mental health services. VA Medical Centers and Vet Centers are listed in the phone book in the blue Government pages. On the Internet, go to www.va.gov/ and look for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Facilities Locator link under "Health Benefits and Services," or go to www.va.gov/racs.
- All returning Soldiers can contact the Military One Source at www.militaryonesource.com and register for a free account.
 - » Free confidential counseling (up to six sessions) in the civilian community is available.
 - » Call U.S. toll free **1-800-342-9647**
 - » International: **Access code + 800-3429-6477** (all 11 digits must be dialed)
 - » Por Español llame: **1-877-888-0727**
 - » Korea: DSN **550-ARMY (2769)**

REFERENCES

- ¹ National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Self-care and self-help following trauma or disasters: A National Center for PTSD fact sheet.
- ² Saakvitne, K.W., and Pearlman, L.A. (Eds.). 1996. Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization. New York: Norton.*

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SOLDIERS' REDEPLOYMENT INFORMATION



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LIFE-STYLE BALANCE

The mission of redeployment home is to ensure life-style balance. In order to help restore balance in your life, follow some of these self-care suggestions. ²

Emotional

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy.
- Reconnect with important people in your life.
- Use the Internet to talk to your buddies.
- Give yourself credit; praise yourself.
- Reread favorite books, watch your favorite movies.
- Identify and seek out comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, and places.
- Find things to make you laugh.
- Spend time with your children.

Spiritual

- Make time to be alone and think about your Higher Power.
- Spend time in nature.
- Find a spiritual connection or community.
- Be open to inspiration.
- Be optimistic and hopeful.
- Be aware of the nonmaterial aspects of life.
- Try, at times, not to be in charge or be the expert.
- Be open to not knowing.
- Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life.
- Meditate, pray, sing.
- Contribute to causes in which you believe.
- Read inspirational literature (talks, music, etc.).

Physical

- Eat regularly (e.g., breakfast, lunch, dinner).
- Eat healthy foods.
- Exercise.
- Get regular medical care for prevention and when needed.
- Take time off when sick.
- Remain active (e.g., dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other physical activity that you enjoy).
- Take time to be sexual with your partner.
- Make it a priority to get 8 hours of sleep per night when possible.
- Wear clothes you like and feel comfortable in.
- Take vacations.

- Take day trips or mini-vacations.
- Take time away from telephones.

Psychological

- Make time for self-reflection.
- Write in a journal.
- Read books that are unrelated to work.
- Do something at which you are not an expert (e.g., new video game or sport).
- Decrease stress in your life.
- Notice your inner experiences; listen to your thoughts, judgments, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings.
- Let others know different aspects of your personality.
- Engage your mind in a new area (e.g., go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, auction, or theater performance).
- Practice receiving positive feedback from others.
- Be curious.
- Say “no” to extra responsibilities sometimes.

WHAT IF I HAVE SLEEP PROBLEMS OR NIGHTMARES?

Many Soldiers who have been deployed for combat have nightmares related to the deployment. If this happens to you, you may wake up feeling terrified. Nightmares are not a sign that you are “going crazy.” They are a common way of working through the memories of combat. The following suggestions have been shown to help reduce sleep problems:

- **Keep bed only for sleep.** Do not watch TV, review work, or solve problems while in bed. Go to bed only when you are drowsy and ready for sleep.
- **If you do not fall asleep within 30 minutes, get up.** Go to another area and do something (i.e., read a book, listen to relaxing music) until you feel drowsy.
- **Have a regular bedtime and rising time.** Go to sleep and wake up at the same time everyday.
- **“Wind down” before bedtime.** Do something calming, like light reading, listening to soothing music, praying, using guided imagery, or a doing a crossword puzzle.
- **Take short daytime naps.** Naps lasting 10 to 20 minutes can improve mental performance and mood. Nighttime sleep plus daytime naps should add up to about 8 hours to be optimally effective.
- **Decrease stimulants.** Avoid smoking or drinking beverages with caffeine in the afternoon or evening.

- **Make your room comfortable.** Add things that you find calming (e.g., a picture of your family or pet, a beautiful landscape, or a poem or prayer), and remove anything that may hinder rest. Wearing a soft foam earplug can help block external noises. Use dark shades or curtains if your room is too bright. Sleep in a room that is comfortable.
- **Get help for sleep problems.** If the above suggestions do not work after several nights, do not wait for the problem to go away on its own. See your doctor right away. Medical personnel will be familiar with your problem and can provide you with effective treatments for your individual situation.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Stress is not necessarily harmful. Everyday stressors are common; however, when the stress is prolonged or overwhelming and you are not able to cope (for example, you think about it constantly), it can become physically and/or psychologically harmful. A “suck it up and drive on” ethos really helped in the heat of battle, but it is not a good tactic after battle if it keeps you from seeking helpful treatment.

The self-help practices mentioned above usually help reduce the effects of combat and deployment; however, talk to your medical doctor or a mental health professional if:

- You are experiencing any symptoms that worry you and are causing distress.
- Your symptoms are causing significant changes in your relationships.
- Your symptoms are making it hard to do your job.
- You are abusing alcohol or drugs to feel better.
- You are unable to find relief with the strategies listed above.

Negative coping behaviors cause problems. Actions that may feel immediately helpful but that can cause problems later include smoking, abusing drugs or alcohol, isolating yourself, being a workaholic, exhibiting violent behavior, demonstrating angry intimidation of others, eating unhealthy foods, expressing self-destructive behavior (e.g., attempting suicide), and getting into or staying in dysfunctional relationships.